

# INTERMISSION

INTERNATIONAL MISSION IN TEN PAGES.

**FLEECEOS:  
REALITY OR  
FICTION ?**

ARMENIA:  
VIBRANT LAND OF  
PAST AND PRESENT

RESTRICTED MILITARY  
AREA >>

THE OLD NEW  
TREND IN ACTIVE  
CITIZENSHIP

DEALING WITH A  
CULTURAL  
EARTHQUAKE

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“Include Me” Youth Exchange

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# Armenia: Vibrant Land Of Past And Present

By Lilit Shakhbazyan and Zaruhi Pokatsyan

*"Traditions help everyone to learn about the past, to share values, to love one's family and place of origin."*

Tradition is something that transmitted from the past to present. Traditions are an important factor in everyone's life. It's the foundation of a prosperous lifetime. In order to keep it alive, doing our part to preserve it is extremely necessary.

When people move to another country, some of them decide to follow the customs of the new country, others prefer to keep their own customs. We are two girls from Armenia, a country with a rich traditional background and we both find it important to learn foreigners' customs, without, of course, forgetting our own. With this article we would like to highlight our thoughts on customs and traditions and how we feel after meeting international friends and learning about so many and different traditions and culture. Armenia's culture, customs and traditions have formed through many centuries. Armenia is famous as one of the nations that continuously tried to keep and save their cultural heritage. For instance, we have a special Christian tradition "Vardavar", an ancient festival which is traditionally associated with the female goddess Astghik, who was the goddess of water, beauty, love and fertility.



Armenian kids having fun with water during Astghik Festival

The festivities associated with this religious observance of Astghik were named “Vartavar” because Armenians offered her roses as a celebration. In armenian yart means "rose" and var mean "rise", this is why it was celebrated in the harvest time.

Keeping traditions alive is important for teaching the next generation about shared past, history, and customs. For children, this is very important to learn to acquire a positive behavior and sense of love for their country. Traditions help everyone to learn, to share values, to love one’s family and place of origin, the history of their families, their homeland. And let’s don’t forget about the religious traditions. Religious traditions include holidays, rituals, rites of passage and values. Keeping religious traditions alive helps us to have a sense of connection to the past, as many religious traditions have been alive for centuries.

Nowadays, in that modern and dynamic society we live in, keeping traditions alive is difficult. If every person, every citizen accepts the importance of keeping and sharing the past and history we will not face that problem. Everyone, every citizen should do his/her best do keep his/her environment clean, save the culture, speak and share the fundamentals of their history and culture, because this is what makes us unique and yet connected forever.



# Dealing With a Cultural Shock

By Daniil Botsenkov and Ihor Myslovskyi

"I will never forget those five years", Mila said right at the beginning of our conversation. The 28-years-old Macedonian Milica Ivanova had lived through unforgettable experience in 2008 when she decided to continue her military education at the Turkish Police Academy in Ankara. The classrooms near Ankara became her new home for five years. Living in a Turkish conservative society gave her both negative and positive feelings. Having already traveled around 14 countries, Mila confessed that she felt the most powerful cultural shock exactly in Turkey.

## What had you known about Turkey before you went there?

"Honestly, I had not known so much. The only thing that I remembered about Turkey was that it was a Muslim country. But I went there for studying. The International Police Academy of Turkey had contract with many countries. Every year they took five students from each state to train them. This Academy was very well-known, it was the forth most prestigious in Europe. I got a chance to become one of its students so I decided to use this opportunity."

## Did you experience a cultural shock?

"Yes, it is a perfect word to describe my feelings - cultural shock. I needed to integrate into society where women must obey some informal, unwritten rules and norms. It was obligatory if they wanted to be accepted and not to be judged. We have a totally different situation in Macedonia. Our women have freedom of choice while Turkish women do not. So I had to find the most proper way of behaviour under those conditions because I was going to stay there for five years."

## Did you try somehow to integrate yourself into the Turkish society?

"I have never accepted their strict rules and norms related to women. I find them unfair and they are totally opposite to my values. I hated the fact that they pushed me into the Muslim religion. I told them that it was not my religion but one guy used to read for me one sentence from the Koran every night. I used to say that I did not want to hear it but he totally ignored it. It was



Milica and her colleagues from the Police Academy in Ankara, Turkey

difficult to integrate because the Police Academy was located near Ankara, an area with conservative Muslims. I tried to keep a balance between my Macedonian soul and Turkish culture, tried to respect the place where I was living, but that was a complicated task. Sometimes I thought that even prisoners had more fun than we did in the Academy."

### Have you ever been discriminated there?

"Unfortunately, yes. For example, in the Police Academy I had selfdefense classes. There were three girls and thirty nine boys in my group, which meant that girls had to practice with boys in couples all the time. But none of the boys, including the professor, wanted to practice with me. And the only reason was because I was a girl. The other two Turkish girls were always shy to do the selfdefense tactics, and I understood why. The guys disrespected women."



Milica and her family spending their free time in Turkey

### How were you coping with all those problems?

"There were many people from other countries as well. So I felt that I was not the only one who was experiencing that cultural shock. We were sharing all our difficulties, trying to understand why it happened and how we could overcome all those barriers. We also understood that we were living in a conservative society where all people strictly followed traditions. We could escape the Academy only once per month. It was a little but it helped us discover a different Turkey - more modern and respectful."

### Do you want to come back to Turkey?

"For living - definitely not. For making a visit - yes. I would like to see my Turkish classmates. Traveling around Turkey is also a fascinating idea. This country is beautiful. People are very hospitable, friendly and open to conversations. They are always curious about the rest of the countries and cultures, want to know all details."

### How did that experience influence your personality?

"Being there, I realised that the world was so "colourful". You faced crazy and unacceptable things which could be welcomed by others. But the most important thing that I learned is that even if we are different we should love and respect each other."



# FLEECEOS: REALITY OR FICTION?

The crowd witnessing Aleksandar's suppression over the President of Fleeceos right in front of the Parliament's building

After the first election in the new-formed country Fleeceos, the new elected socialist President Emanuel Carrasco chose the parliament, who then elected the four different ministries (Education, Economy, Culture and Interior). Everything seemed that it was working fine in the new government, the new administration was fully motivated trying to define the values, rules and norms of the new country and the population seemed to supporting it, but every coin has two sides.

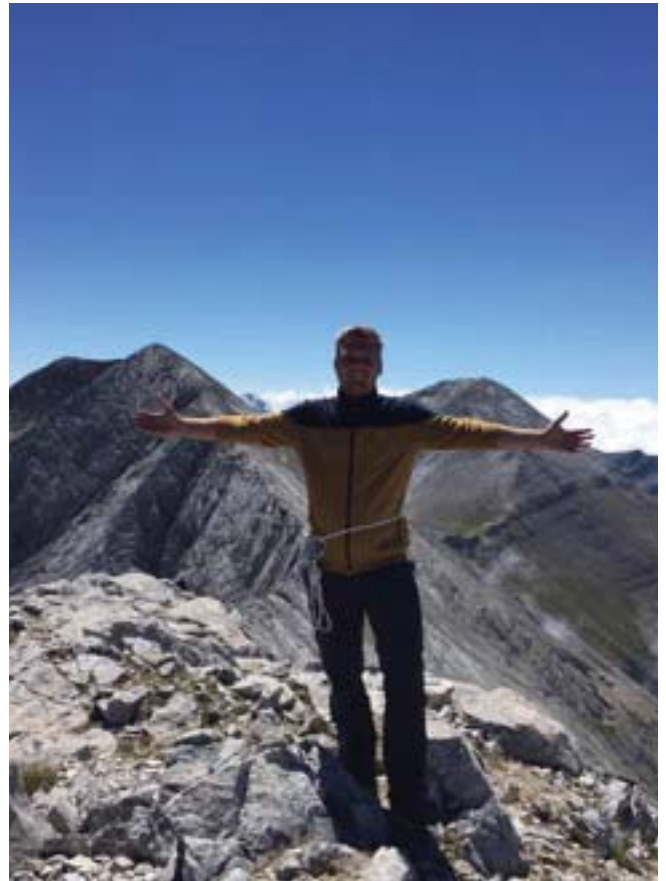
After the elections in November came the winter and with it the lack of food. The population was starving and with starvation came the disappointment with the new-formed administration. A new political figure emerged to lead the revolution and the unsatisfied population. With the

promise of a trade agreement with Earth United (EU) he marched with his followers behind to the parliament and overtook Emanuel on the presidency.

Two years of dictatorship in Fleeceos and people weren't starving anymore. The new treaty with the EU brought food in exchange for the only product produced in Fleeceos - Sulfuros Dioxidosos. The EU needed the product to manufacture weapons to fight against the America of Ronald J. Strump. Because of these need of the Earth United the so called Great Leader Alexander Metodiev had the power to introduce some policies to intimidate Fleeceos population, which was tired of the corruption of the new executive. The new government introduced policies like execution, extreme prosecution, limited freedom of speech and even prohibited social networks like Fotobook and Fonogram;. That was a clear breach of the Human Rights Agreement signed by Fleeceos and also of Article 7 of Fleeceos' Constitution.

The autocratic dominance of the new leader has crossed the borders of Fleeceos and right now the government began invading the neighboring countries. The EU hasn't decided what to do about this fast growing problem. The Earth United doesn't want to make a decision that might affect the trade treaty with Fleeceos because of the pressure of Ronald J. Stramp's America.

*The tale of Fleeceos is just fiction but we have to ask ourselves is that really a parallel universe? Isn't it based on our world? If we look around we can see that Fleeceos is not far from being real. While many people have been running from the war in Syria to find shelter in the European countries, the EU has been discussing agreements that if signed might lead to the implementation of some of the above mentioned policies, which will affect every society in every country. Isn't that the way Earth United reacted when they needed Sulfuros Dioxidosos from Great Leader Alexander? Sometimes reality can be confused with fiction but the real problem comes when fiction becomes true.*



Aleksandar Metodiev -  
The Dictator -  
enjoying his trip to  
Bulgarian Pirin  
mountain



# THE OLD NEW TREND IN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



“Be an active citizen! Go out there and be the change you want to see!”

By Hristina Nenova and Nikos Mangos

Nowadays it is very important to be an active citizen in order for every country, no matter its political system, to be constructed of a dynamic society. Active citizenship can be expressed in many ways. Active citizens always vote during elections because they care about what happens in their country. They join different groups, for example non-governmental organisations, where citizens with the same interest (environmental, economic, social, etc.) can share knowledge and experience and fight for their cause.

Active citizens want to know what happens in their country, that's why they inform themselves on a daily basis from different information sources such as newspapers, TV news and social media. Some of them join local and national groups or organisations that take care of people in needs by volunteering in different activities (giving food to poor, taking care of elderly people).

Sometimes when citizens in a country are not satisfied with their government, be it because they see that the choices and actions of the government are not contributing to the public good, or because they want governors to take a

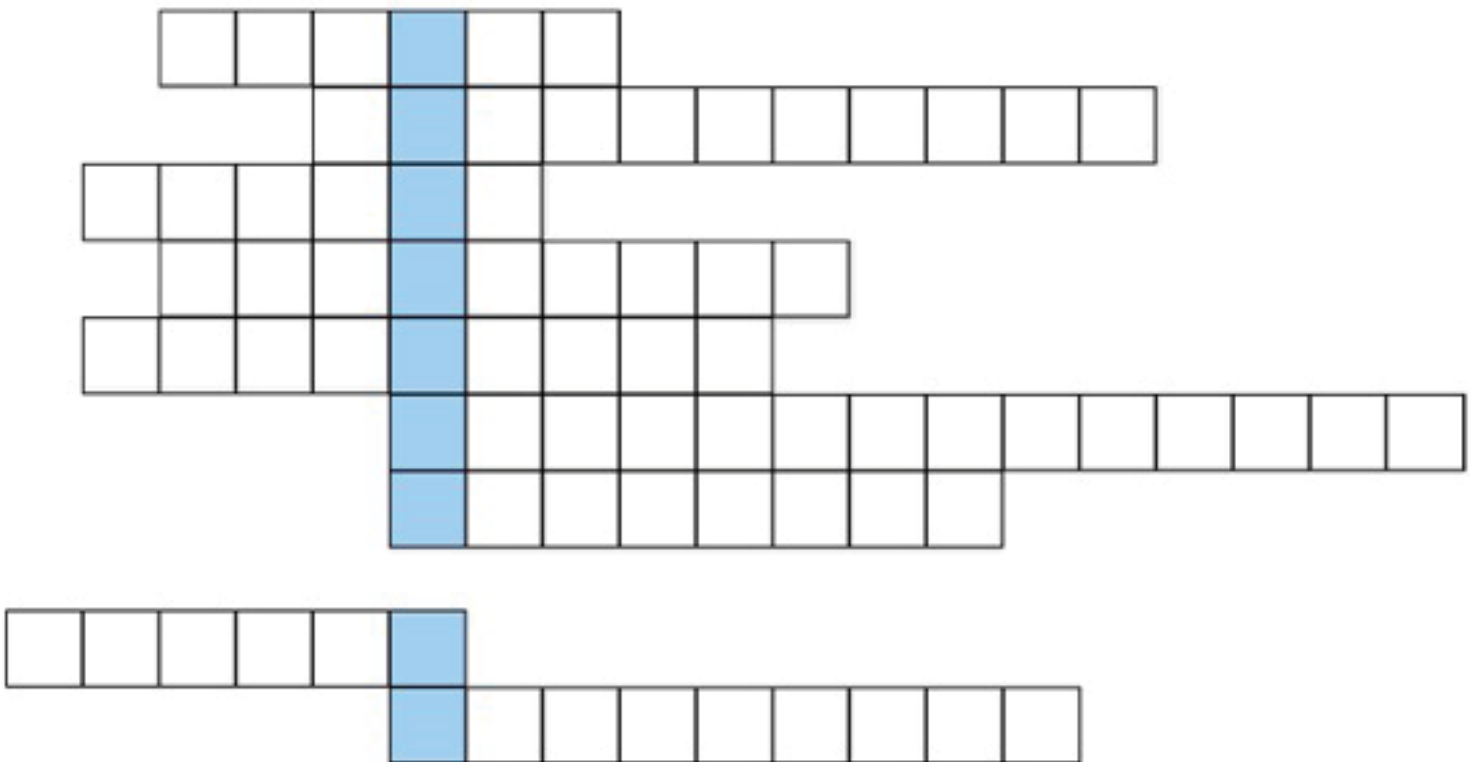
certain action, one way of showing activism is by protesting. There have been many instances of such type of active citizenship around the world and especially in Europe. One recent example is the mass protest of Bulgarian citizens against the government in 2012. Thousands of Bulgarians were not satisfied with the then ruling party led by ex-Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski.

The primary reason - a state loan which the parliament approved but citizens rejected. People in the biggest towns in Bulgaria have been going pouring into the streets with posters on which it was written that they want the government down. After four months of constant protests Oresharski resigned. People fought together for a common cause and they succeeded.

It is very easy just to stay home complaining about things you don't like and do nothing to change it, except writing angry posts on Facebook or other social media. It is much more difficult to back up common societal ideas which you like or support. The lesson? Be an active citizen! Go out there and be the change you want to see!

## CROSSWORD

1. Quality of being fair
2. Unwillingness to accept others
3. Moral principles
4. Capacity to have an effect
5. Opinion not based on actual experience
6. Treating different people unfairly
7. Same options for everybody
8. Differentiating people based on their gender
9. Social group with common national or cultural background



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